



No. 27

TIM HOLT



STRAWMAN vs. REDMASK



10¢



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HE ONLY SEEMED A THING OF STRAW, CLAD IN A MAN'S GARMENTS—YET A HEART BEAT UNDER HIS BLUE SHIRT—A HEART FILLED WITH GREED AND THE LUST FOR LOOT! AND WHEN THE STRAWMAN MET REDMASK AND DEFEATED HIM AGAIN AND AGAIN, MEN'S FACES TURNED AWAY, FOR ALL KNEW THAT THE CRIMSON CAVALIER HAD FINALLY MET HIS MATCH IN THE MIGHTY STRUGGLE OF—

"REDMASK vs THE STRAWMAN!"

AS DAWN SWEEPS ACROSS THE PLAINS COUNTRY, A STRANGE FIGURE STIRS TO LIFE...

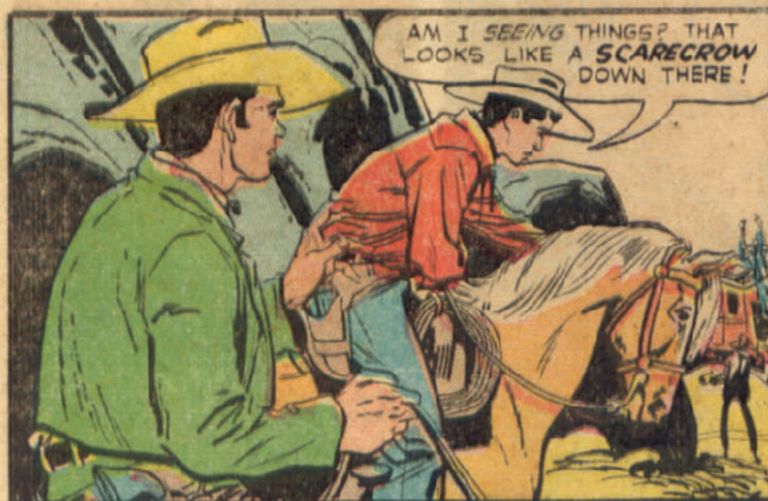


ON A COALBLACK STALLION, THE STRAW MAN GALLOPS ACROSS THE GRASSLANDS...

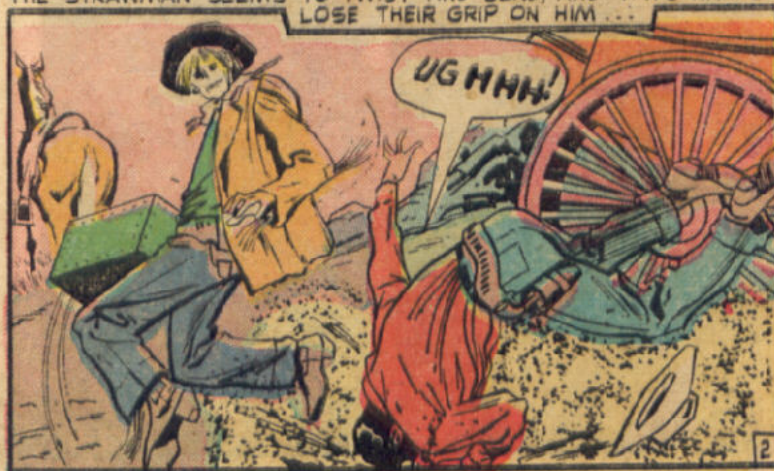


FRANK BOULE

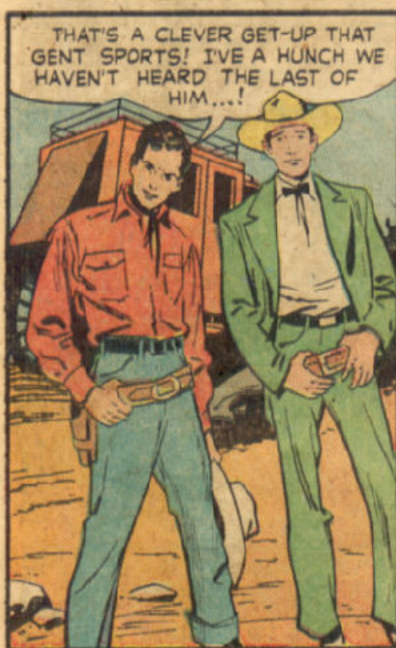
TIM HOLT



BUT AS TIM LEAPS FROM THE SADDLE OF HIS GALLOPING BRONC, THE STRAWMAN SEEMS TO TWIST AND BEND, AND TIM'S HANDS LOSE THEIR GRIP ON HIM...



TIM HOLT



NEXT DAY, AS THE ARIZONA-
PACIFIC RAILROAD CHUGS TO A
HALT—

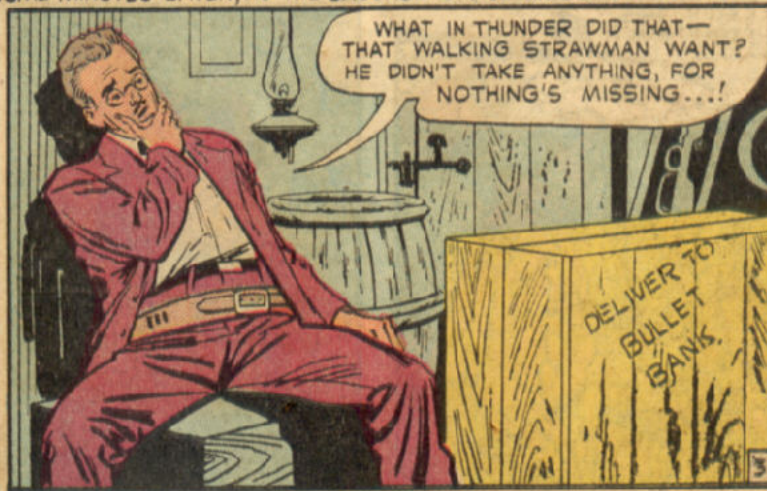
NOW WHY IN THUNDER
DID SOME HOMBRE TIE THAT
COW THERE FOR? THERE'S
NO HOLDUP MEN IN SIGHT!



IN THE BAGGAGE CAR...

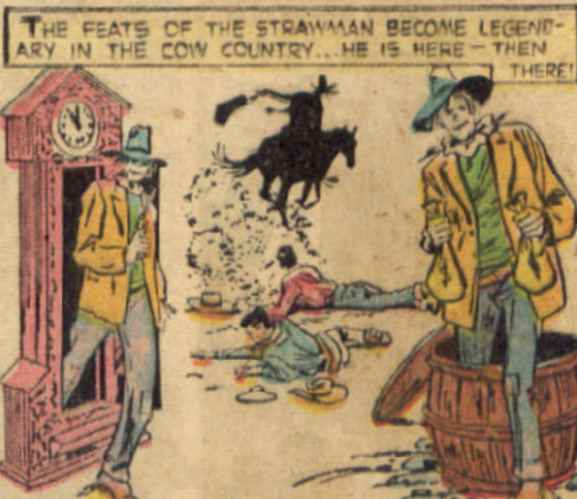


SOME MINUTES LATER, AS THE BAGGAGE-CAR CLERK COMES TO ...



TIM HOLT

IN THE TOWN OF BULLET, SOME HOURS LATER...



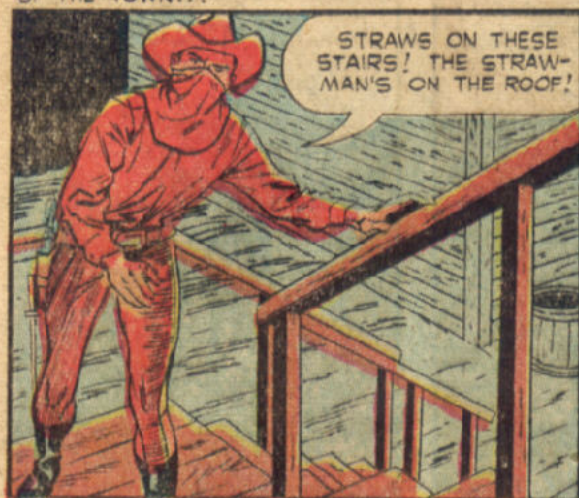
AND IN THE TOWN OF BULLET, BITING TONGUES BURN TIM HOLT'S EARS...

THAT NIGHT, IN THE BREAKS SOUTH OF TOWN...



TIM HOLT

AFTER A SEARCH OF THE ALLEYS AND BACK WAYS OF THE TOWN...



AND THE NIGHT IS FILLED WITH THE STRAWMAN'S MOCKING LAUGHTER...



RETURNING TO THE FARO QUEEN SALOON, THE STRAWMAN LETS HIMSELF IN THROUGH AN OPEN WINDOW...



REDMASK'S CUP IS BITTER! NOT ONLY HAS THE STRAWMAN TRICKED HIM, BUT HE HAS DONE IT BEFORE THE ENTIRE TOWN OF BULLET...

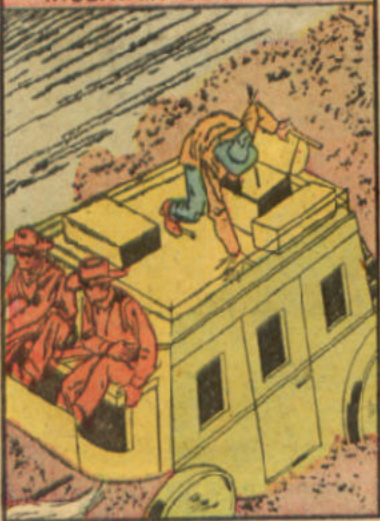


HAS REDMASK MET HIS MASTER? IS THE STRAWMAN SO CLEVER, SO INVINCIBLE THAT EVEN REDMASK CANNOT BRING HIM TO TASK?



TIM HOLT

SOME DAYS LATER, AS THE BULLEY STAGE TRUNDLES DOWN FROM THE HIGH MOUNTAIN COUNTRY...



THE EASIEST WAY I KNOW OF TO ROB THE STAGE — STOW ABOARD IN A TRUNK AND KNOCK THEM OUT!



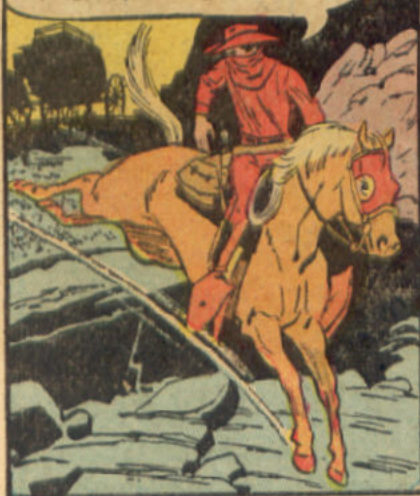
MEANWHILE, REDMASK HAS BEEN PATROLLING THE STAGECOACH TRAIL

HUH — IT'S REDMASK! WHY'N'T YUH GIVE UP?

YOU'LL NEVER CATCH THE STRAWMAN! HE'S TOO SMART FOR YUH!



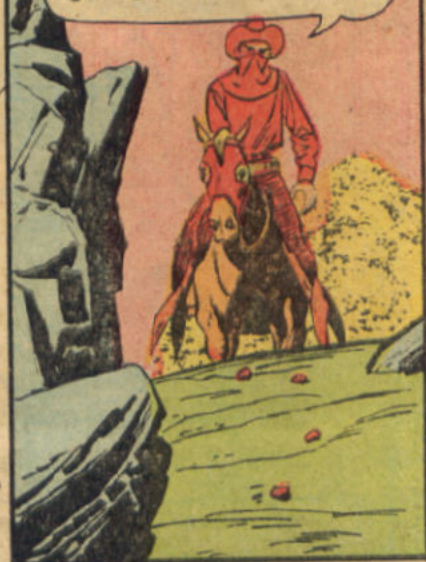
I COULDN'T TELL THEM I MADE A DEAL WITH THE STAGECOACH COMPANY TO SUBSTITUTE A SPECIALLY PREPARED MONEY BOX...



...A BOX WITH A FALSE BOTTOM AND HOLES BORED IN IT! AS THE STRAWMAN RIDES, TINY RED PEBBLES WILL SHAKE OUT THROUGH THOSE HOLES TO MARK THE TRAIL HE TAKES ...!



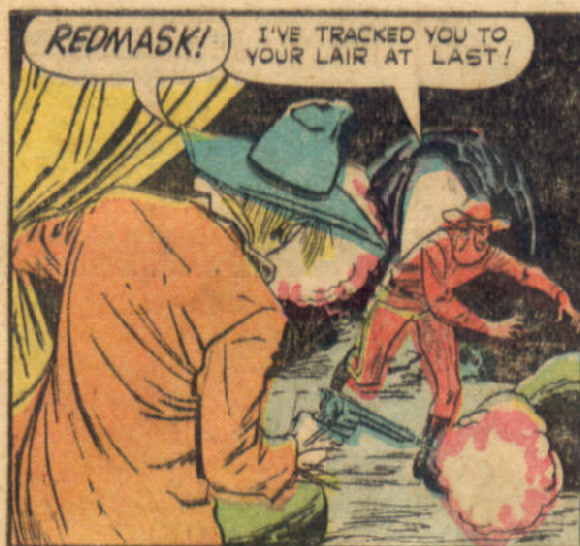
THEY'RE LEADING ME STRAIGHT TO HIS HIDEOUT!



SOMEBODY'S COMING...!



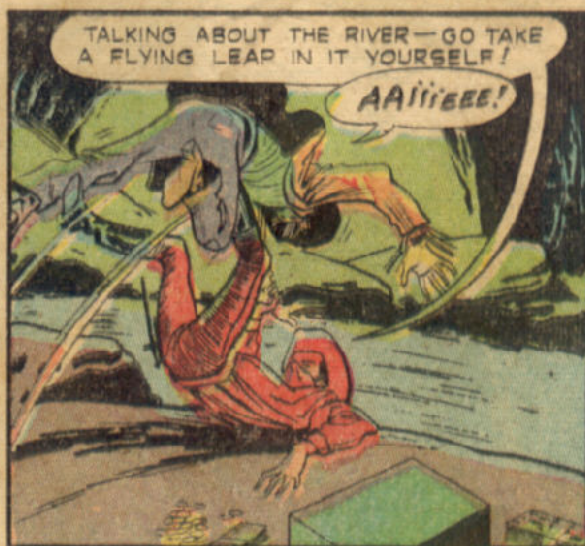
TIM HOLT



HAND TO HAND, REELING ACROSS THE STONE FLOOR OF THE SUBTERRANEAN CAVE, THEIR BREATHS BOBBING IN THEIR THROATS, REDMASK AND THE STRAWMAN BATTLE TO THE DEATH...



WITH A CUNNING TWIST OF HIS BODY, THE STRAWMAN YANKS FREE AND SENDS REDMASK FLYING...



BORNE SWIFTLY BY THE RIVER CURRENT, THE STRAWMAN IS SWEEPED BENEATH THE STONE OF THE CLIFF—FROM WHICH THERE IS NO ESCAPE...



BUT IS THIS THE END FOR THE MAN OF STRAW? OR WILL SOME QUIRK OF FATE SAVE HIM WHEN BY ALL THE LAWS OF HONEST MEN HE SHOULD MEET HIS FATE IN A WATERY GRAVE?

DON'T MISS SUCCEEDING ISSUES OF **TIM HOLT** FOR THE STUNNING ANSWER TO THE FATE OF THE STRAWMAN!



TIM HOLT

TIM HOLT

HULAPA WAS A BAD APACHE. HE KILLED AND HE LOOTED, AND HIS HAND WAS TURNED AGAINST ALL MEN! WHEN HIS MAD HATE SETTLED ON TIM HOLT—EVEN **REDMASK** FOUND HIMSELF IN A TRAP OF DEATH SET BY THE—

"APACHE KILLER!"

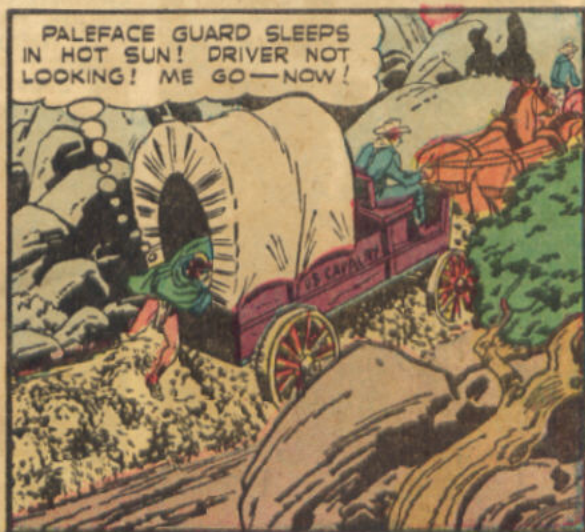


AN ARMY QUARTERMASTER TRAIN CREAKS AND RATTLES ACROSS THE ARIZONA SAGE FLATS. INSIDE IT IS A LONE APACHE, SULLEN WITH FURY...

PALEFACES TAKE ME FORT- DANGER! THEY WILL SHOOT ME—IF I LET THEM...!



PALEFACE GUARD SLEEPS IN HOT SUN! DRIVER NOT LOOKING! ME GO—NOW!



TIM HOLT

AS A RED SHADOW DROPS AND LIES MOTIONLESS, THE WAGON RATTLES ON...



AT A STEADY LOPE, HULAPA MOVES INTO THE HIGH MESA COUNTRY...



GOT NO WEAPON. NEED GUN. HU—FIND PALEFACE HOUSE, STEAL GUN!

SOME HOURS LATER, HE STRIKES WITH THE SPEED AND FURY OF AN ENRAGED RATTLER...

LATER, SOME MILES BEYOND...



PALEFACE HUNT THE RABBIT, HULAPA LIKE RATTLESNAKE—ME HUNT PALEFACE!



NOW HULAPA HAVE PONY!

THEN BEGINS A REIGN OF TERROR ACROSS THE ARIZONA TABLELANDS. A TORCH IS FLUNG IN THE NIGHT...



HORSES ARE RUN OFF...

GUTTERAL LAUGHTER GURGLES IN THE BRONC APACHE'S THROAT AS HE SEES HIS PALEFACE TRACKERS BLUNDERING HELPLESSLY IN THE SHALE ROCK NEAR HIS MESA HIDEOUT...



SILLY PALEFACES! HULAPA KILL ONE, TEACH PALEFACES HULAPA HEAP BAD MEDICINE! UGH!

TIM HOLT

AMONG THE MEN HUNTING THE RED RENEGADE ARE TIM HOLT AND HIS SIDEKICK, CHITO...

CHITO—WATCH OUT! SOMEONE UP ABOVE! JUST SAW SUNLIGHT GLINT ON A RIFLE BARREL!



TIM'S SHOT SMASHES THE ROCK LEDGE, AND SENDS A SHOWER OF STONE SPLINTERS BITING INTO HULAPA'S RAGE CONTORTED FACE!

GAHHHGGG! PALEFACE BULLET SMASH STONE—STONE SMASH ME!



HUI! NO MAN SLASH HULAPA'S FACE WITHOUT REVENGE! TONIGHT I TRAIL TO RANCH AND STEAL PALEFACE—FOR FIRE TORTURE!



THAT NIGHT, AT TIM'S T-BAR-H RANCH...

HMMM...I DON'T KNOW WHETHER YOU'RE FAKING ABOUT THAT ANKLE OR NOT, BUT SOMEBODY HAS TO FIX THE BRONC THAT LAMED HIMSELF TODAY!

HONEST, TIM! IT HURTING SOMETHING AWFULLY! YOU FIX THE BRONC!

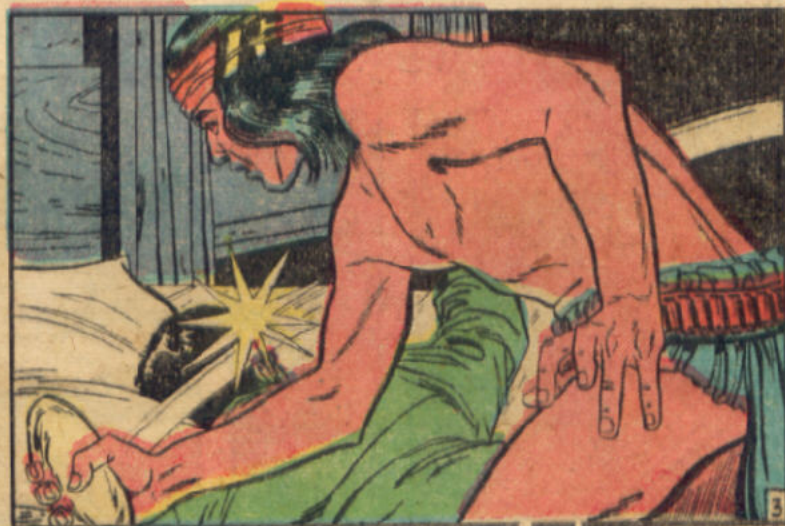


HA! HA! I FOOLING HIM REAL GOOD. MY ANKLE ISN'T HURT, BUT I'M PLENTY TIRED. NOW FOR A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEPING...



HALF AN HOUR LATER, AS CHITO'S SNORES RESOUND THROUGH THE ROOM...

PALEFACE SLEEP! ME GET IN—TAKE HIM OUT!



TIM HOLT

LIKE A SHADOW, HULAPA HAS
COME INTO THE T-H RANCH YARD,
AND LIKE A SHADOW, HE LEAVES IT...

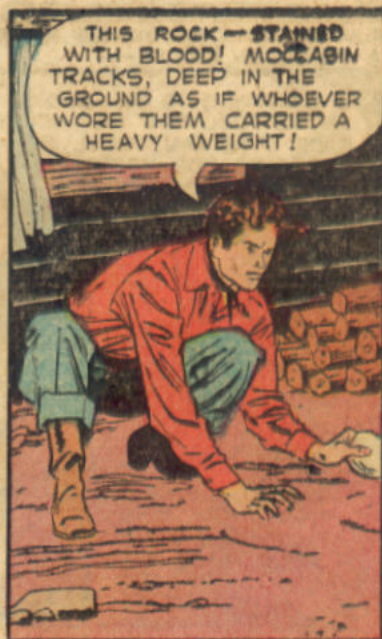


PONIES HIDDEN HALF A
MILE BEYOND CORRAL. ME
MAKE NO NOISE ON
MOCCASINS, SO ME COME
ON FOOT!

TOWARD DAWN...



YAWWWN SURE WILL
BE GOOD TO HIT THE HAY
AND—**HUH? CHITO'S**
BED—MESSED UP! AND
HE'S GONE!

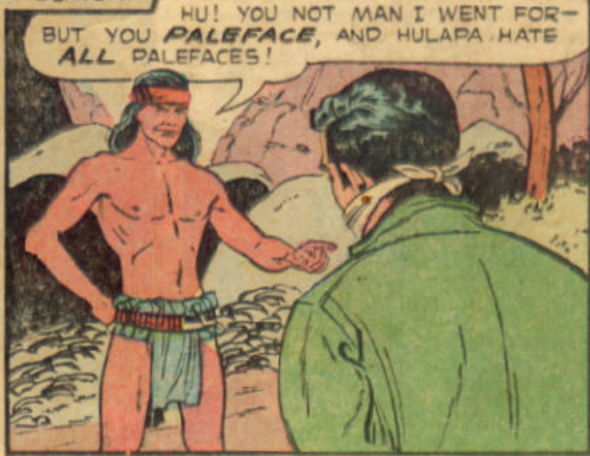


THIS ROCK—STAINED
WITH BLOOD! MOCCASIN
TRACKS, DEEP IN THE
GROUND AS IF WHOEVER
WORE THEM CARRIED A
HEAVY WEIGHT!

THAT RENEGADE APACHE! HE MUST
HAVE TRACKED US DOWN OFF THE RIM
THIS AFTERNOON. HE'LL TORTURE CHITO
TO DEATH JUST TO SATISFY HIS SAVAGE
HATE AND CRUELTY!



BY HIGH NOON, HULAPA IS HIGH ON AN ARIZONA
MESADOR...

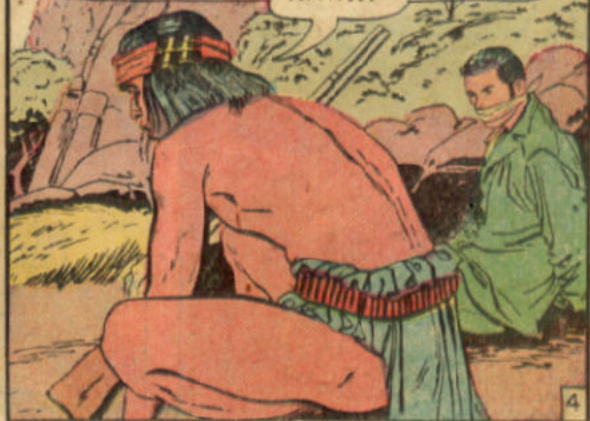


HU! YOU NOT MAN I WENT FOR—
BUT YOU **PALEFACE**, AND HULAPA HATE
ALL PALEFACES!

YOUR FRIEND COME FIND YOU, FIND THIS
TRAP! ME TAKE HIM ALIVE—GOT SPECIAL
TORTURE FOR **HIM!**



HU! ME HEAR HIS PONY'S HOOFS. HE
COME FAST. GO IN TRAP SURE! WHILE
ME WAIT, HEAT KNIVES ME TORTURE-YOU
WITH...

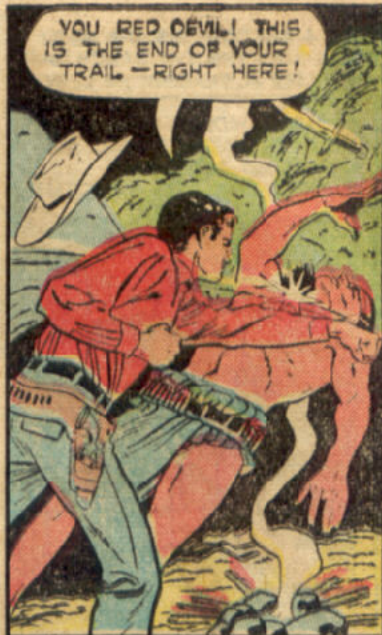


TIM HOLT

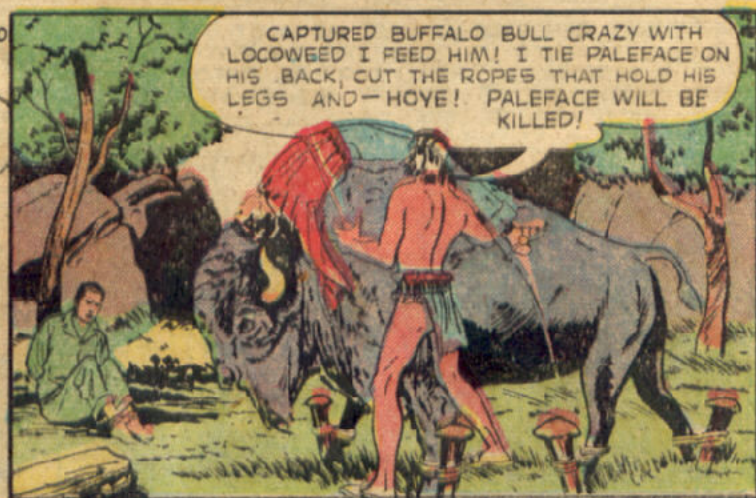
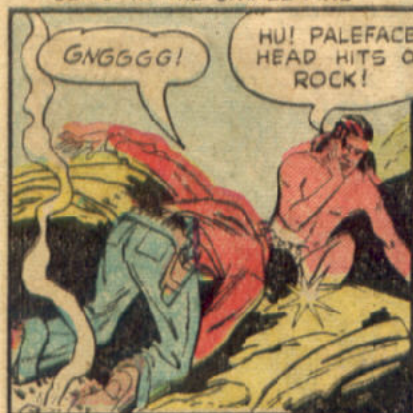
MOVING WITH THE CAUTION OF A HUNTING PUMA, TIM SWINGS ACROSS A CHASM BY LARIAT—



PICKING HIS WAY OVER THE RUBBLE-STREWN MESATOP, TIM HURLS HIMSELF DOWNWARD...



BUT AS TIM HURTTLES FORWARD, INTENT ON FINISHING OFF THE BRONCO APACHE WITH HIS FISTS, HIS BOOT SLIPS IN THE SMALL FIRE—



KICKING, SNORTING, LUNGING CRAZILY AGAINST ROCK LEDGES, THE LOCO-MADDENED BULL HURTTLES DOWN THE MOUNTAIN TRAILS—



TIM HOLT

AND THEN, AS THE GIANT ANIMAL TWISTS AND CAREENS AT HIS MAD PACE, A ROPE SLIPS—JUST SLIGHTLY.

THE ROPE—CLOSE TO MY SPUR...!



I CAN JIGGLE THE SHARP ROWELS AGAINST THE ROPE ... FRAY IT! THEN, AS THE BUFFALO KICKS AND LUNGES, IT WILL OVERSTRAIN THE ROPE AND IT WILL SNAP...!



TENSE MOMENTS LATER...

KICKED MY FEET LOOSE—NOW I'M ABLE TO HANG ON WITH MY LEGS AND PULL FREE OF THE LOOSENED ROPE AROUND THE SHOULDERS...!



MADE IT! NOW TO DROP OFF AND MAKE TRACKS BACK TO CHITO AND THAT RED RENEGADE—AH! THERE'S LIGHTNING!—NOW I CAN GO AS **REDMASK!**



MINUTES LATER—

GOT TO CLIMB STRAIGHT UP THIS CANYON WALL. HULAPA WILL BE WORKING ON CHITO—WITH FIRE AND HOT METAL...!



ABOVE THE CLIMBING REDMASK...

AH! YOUR FRIEND IS DEAD BY NOW. SOON YOU WILL DIE, BUT SLOWLY... SLOWLY... SCREAMING FOR ME TO KILL YOU!



BEG, PALEFACE! BEG FOR MERCY!



TIM HOLT

A SHOT RINGS OUT AND HULAPA SPRINGS BACK WITH A SHRILL CRY!



FOR A LONG TORTURED MOMENT, REDMASK CLASPS HIS REVOLVER—AND THEN TOSSES IT OUT ARCING INTO THE AIR...



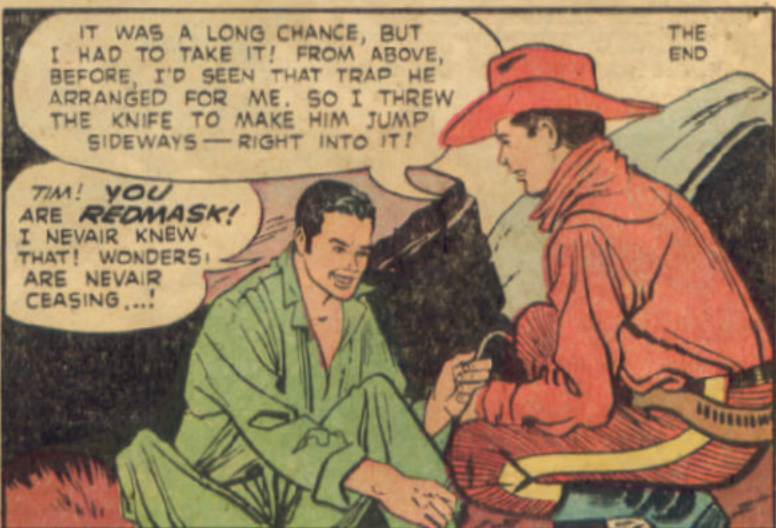
AND COMES DOWN IN THE TRAP HE SET FOR TIM HOLT!



AS HULAPA LEANS FORWARD TO LIFT THE COLT .45, REDMASK HURLS HIS KNIFE...



HULAPA SHOUTS HIS GLEE AS HE SWINGS SIDWAYS—



YOURS ALMOST AS A GIFT!

Valuable BALL POINT PEN

PERSONALIZED
WITH YOUR
NAME
INSCRIBED
IN 22 CARAT
GOLD

Guaranteed
for life!

only 25¢

plus 1 wrapper from
Peter Paul's Almond
Joy or Mounds

You've got to act fast to get this remarkable gift offer—a sensational Ball Point Pen—with your own name inscribed in elegant 22 carat gold—and guaranteed for life! Send only 25¢ in coin, plus 1 wrapper from a Peter Paul MOUNDS or ALMOND JOY candy bar. But do it now—before the offer is called off!

MAIL THIS COUPON TODAY

PETER PAUL, Dept. T H
BOX 28, BROOKLYN 1, NEW YORK

I enclose 25¢ in coin plus 1 wrapper for which please
rush my Ball Point Pen with my name inscribed in gold.

NAME _____
(PRINT NAME CAREFULLY)

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ ZONE _____ STATE _____

Treat yourself to this finer, fresher candy
and get a valuable Ball Point Pen with
your name inscribed in 22 carat gold—
almost as a gift!

ACT NOW!
FOR LIMITED TIME ONLY!

GHOST RIDER

THE

You HANG A MAN!
THE WARDEN GIVES THE SIGNAL; YOU CUT THE CORD; THE TRAP DROPS... CAN HE COME BACK AFTERWARDS— THE ROPE STILL BITING INTO HIS NECK, HIS EYES STILL BULGING— TO DEMAND YOU RETURN WHAT WAS HIS BEFORE HE DIED? CAN HE...? THAT IS THE QUESTION **THE GHOST RIDER** HAS TO ANSWER IN THE CASE OF —

**The
HAUNTED
HANGMAN !**



INSIDE A SUMPTUOUS MANSION ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF A WESTERN TOWN, AARON BICKEL QUARRELS WITH HIS DAUGHTER.

DON'T TRY TO STOP ME, MARTHA! I'VE VISITED YOUR MOTHER'S GRAVE NIGHTLY EVER SINCE SHE DIED, AND **NOTHING**, NOT EVEN WHAT I SEE THERE, CAN STOP ME...

FATHER, DON'T GO! YOUR **HEART..!**



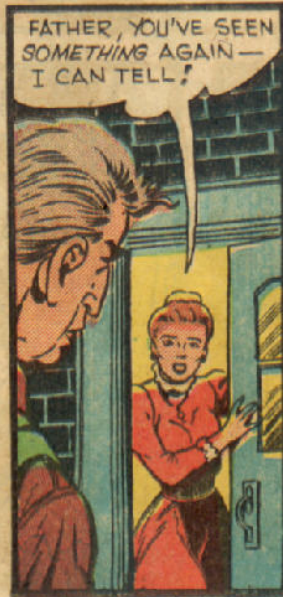
BUT AARON BICKEL IS A STUBBORN MAN—

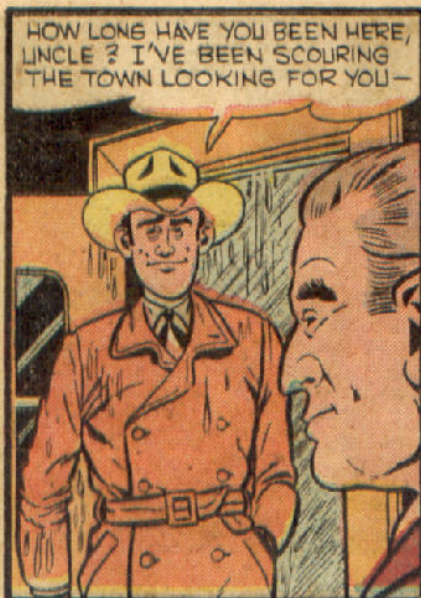
NOTHING CAN STOP ME — NOT EVEN **THE GHOST OF THE HANGING MAN...**



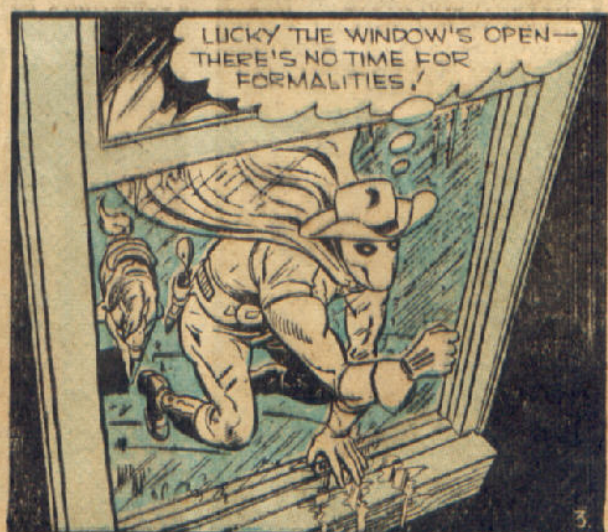
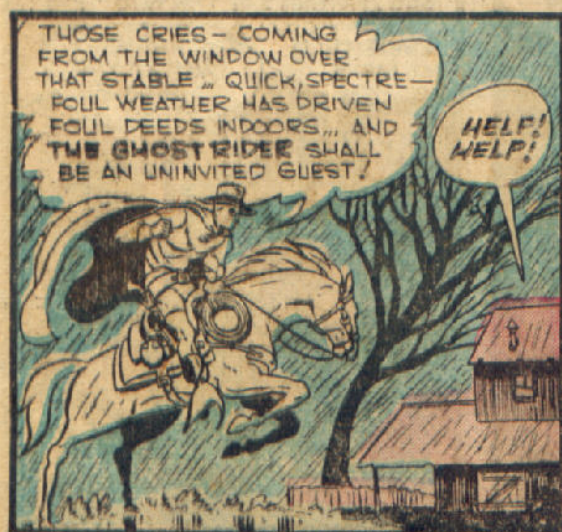


FEAR IS
FORCING AN
ANSWER
THROUGH
AARON BICKEL'S
LIPS WHEN
SUDDENLY
THE SKY
SPITS A
FIERCE
BOLT OF
LIGHTNING.

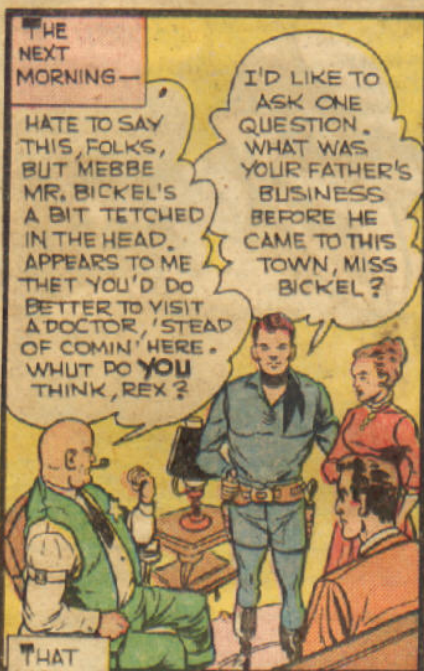
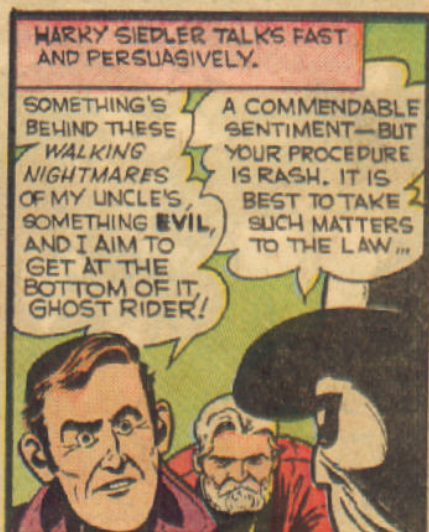


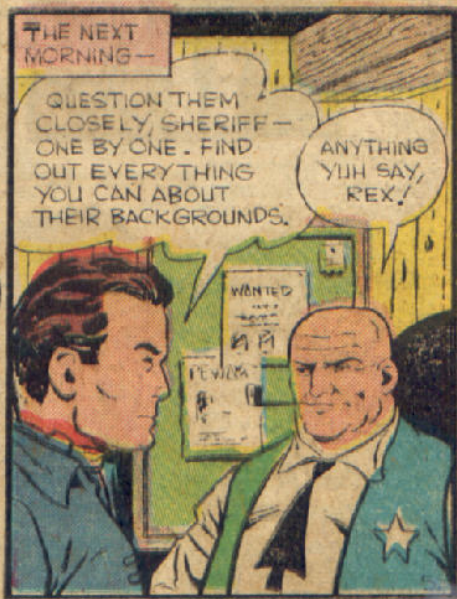
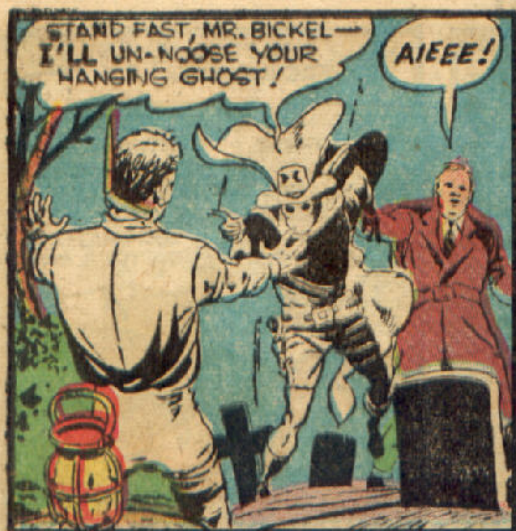


LATER THAT NIGHT IN JARVIS' ROOM OVER THE STABLE —



TIM HOLT





TIM HOLT

THESE ARE THE ANSWERS TO THE SHERIFF'S QUESTIONS—

LOVE MY FATHER?
YES... AS MUCH AS
ANY DAUGHTER
COULD LOVE A
MOROSE, BROODING
MAN WHO FRIGHTENED
ALL HER SUITORS
AWAY...!

I SLAVED FOR
AARON BICKEL
NIGH ONTO FORTY
YEARS, AND HARDLY
EVER A KIND WORD
OUT OF HIM. LOW
WAGES TOO. WHY
DID I STAY...? I
DUNNO... IT WAS
MY LOT IN LIFE,
I RECKON...

MY UNCLE WASN'T
A BAD SORT. A
LITTLE MELANCHOLY—
YOU HAD TO
UNDERSTAND HIM...
I WAS IN THE THEATRE
BACK EAST BEFORE I
CAME TO LIVE WITH MY
UNCLE. I WORKED AS
A STAGEHAND...



LATER, IN
SING SONG'S
LAUNDRY—

YOU DID A GOOD JOB
DRUGGING THOSE DRINKS.
I JUST LOOKED IN AT THE
BICKEL MANSION, AND
THEY'RE ALL SNORING LIKE
BUGLERS. HURRY, SING SONG—
WE HAVE MUCH WORK
TO DO TONIGHT...!

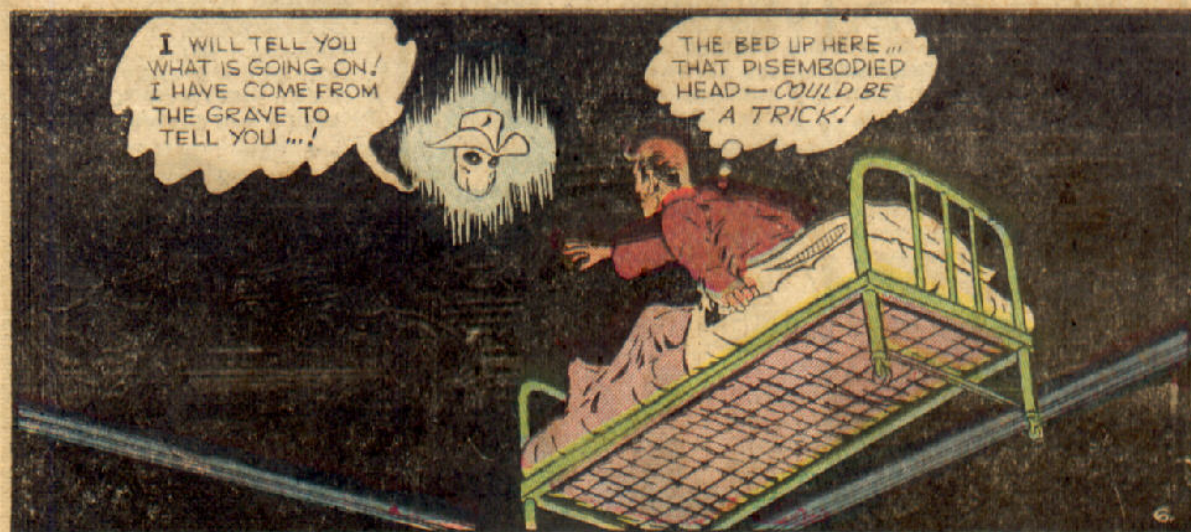
THE CHIMES ARE STILL TOLLING MIDNIGHT WHEN—
WITH SUDDEN DIZZYING SPEED—HARRYSIEDLER'S
BED FLIES UP TO THE CEILING!

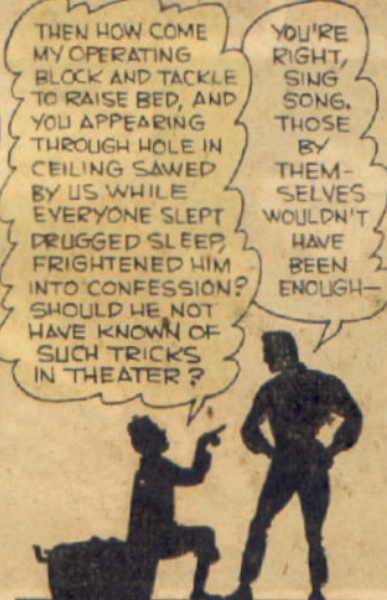
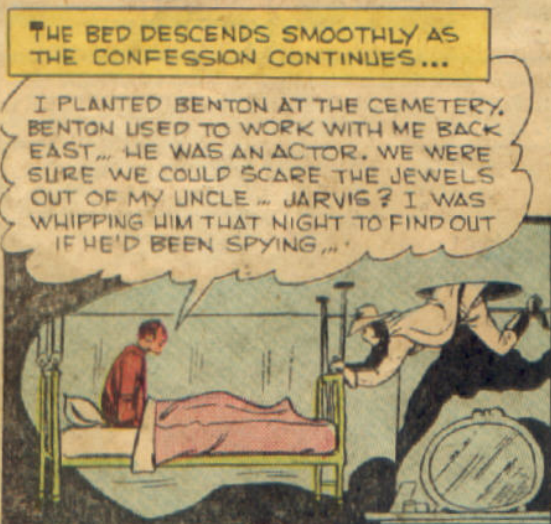
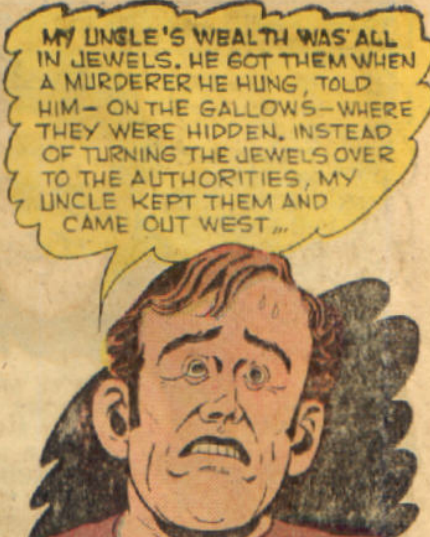
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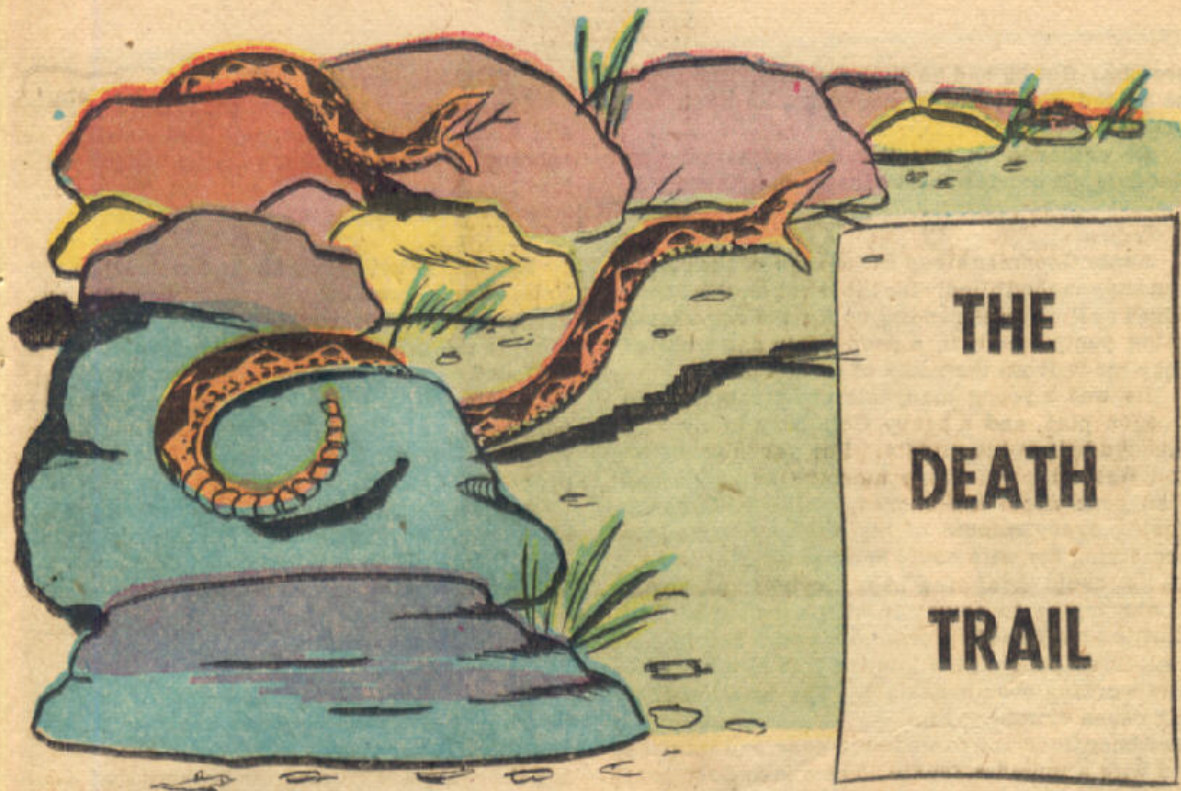
MIST'VE BEEN TIRED,
HAVEN'T SLEPT THIS
WAY IN—HEY! WHAT'S
GOING ON?

I WILL TELL YOU
WHAT IS GOING ON!
I HAVE COME FROM
THE GRAVE TO
TELL YOU...!

THE BED UP HERE...
THAT DISEMBODIED
HEAD—COULD BE
A TRICK!







THE DEATH TRAIL

The wind whipped his dark, dank hair where it fluttered under the red flannel headband twisted around his forehead. His black eyes were thin slits, and his copper-toned nostrils flared at the sweet, pungent smell of the sage. In his heart a flame of hate was rising, hate against Abner Goodman, the man who had caught him killing his steers, pistol-whipped him, and brought Hector into the paleface fort jail.

Now Hector was free. Miles behind him, along the trickling waters of a tiny mountain stream, two dead men lay, staring sightlessly up at the blue bowl of cloudless sky. They wore blue uniforms. They had been his guards in the little quartermaster wagon taking him to Phoenix and the railroad, to ship him eastward. Hector was possessed of the patience of enh, the prairie dog. He waited until they made themselves sodden with drink from the bottle the redheaded one had kept in an overcoat pocket. Then Hector had struck, hard and fast, using the heavy chains that bound his wrists to crush in the skull of one, and then snatching the dead man's gun and shooting the other, who was drunkenly fumbling at his service holster.

It had been light work to strip their bodies of carbines and revolvers and loop them around his slim waist and broad shoulders. Cutting the horses from their traces, he had mounted one bareback and made a hackamore for the other, leading him as a spare.

Hector had ridden many miles this day. Even now, though the mesas were turning a bloody purple under the rays of the setting sun, he told himself he must ride many more. One thing he

had to do before he could cut himself free from his ties with this land of the Dragoons and paleface forts. He must find Abner Goodman and kill him.

His pride — the hot, savage pride of a Mesquero Apache — was flooding his veins with the hesh-ke, the urge to slaughter. It was a killing madness, this fury that rode Hector, sitting on his shoulder and whispering the old tales of the warriors into his willing ears.

He toed the Army horse into a canter, moving silently among the scarlet-headed ocotilla blossoms, and the great tall spires of the saguaro cactus. Once he swung down to hack at a barrel cactus and cut out the pulp, to chew it as he rode, extracting the sweet water the pulp stores up for just such lonely riders as Hector.

He made good time, skirting the mesalands and heading outward through the vast ocean of sandy soil that was ornamented, here and there, by the yellow flowers of the bitterbush, and the silvery berries of the needled pinon. To his brooding, hate-filled mind came the thought that this was his land, this arid waste of flowers and sand, of sudden death and the sweet fragrance of the sage.

The paleface had come into this land where his forefathers had lived and fought and died. The palefaces came and built their ranches and raised their herds of steers, and the Apaches had been pushed back into the high hills. Hector grunted. The palefaces would be out looking for him soon, but not soon enough to save Abner Goodman from a carbine bullet.

He would have preferred to hang the rancher over a slow fire, upside-down, and listen to him

scream. But he had no time for that. The death he meted out would of necessity be swift and sudden.

He cantered on into the darkness that was flooding the sandy wastes of eastern Arizona . . .

Abner Goodman stood in the rays of the rising sun and reached blindly for the towel on the ranch house wall. He was redding up for the day ahead, using pump water in a deep basin and a bar of soap made from the roots of a soap plant.

He was a young man, tall and straight as an Oregon pine, and a heavy Colt hung in a shell-studded belt at his middle. For seven years he had washed here, every morning at sunup, and then gone about his chores, building his ranch during every minute of his working hours into something his wife could know pride in.

He could hear the baby crying, and young Abner trying to amuse it with a rattle he had whittled out of soft pine some weeks before. A clatter of pans in the kitchen told him his wife was working over breakfast. The smell of frying bacon drifted to him.

Abner Goodman came in the door and watched his wife a moment, fondly. The sun and the heat had not withered her. She was young and pretty, a good mate for a man to have in this wild land.

She looked at him, and the young rancher saw the worry in her eyes. He smiled and shook his head. "Don't worry about Hector. He's under heavy guard, on his way back east."

She stirred the bacon in the iron skillet and shivered. "I do worry, Ab. That Hector is a bad one. A bronceo Apache! He won't rest until he comes back and -- kills you!"

Goodman sat down at the table. He frowned slightly. "Lord knows I didn't want all this to happen to him. I just wanted to teach him a lesson. If Captain Jackletts hadn't happened along at the time, I would have let him go with a pistol-whipping -- to teach him to respect property rights."

The woman turned and her eyes showed quick, hot anger. "Captain Jackletts had been hunting for him. He couldn't catch him. So he took him away from you, and now Hector blames you for everything that's happened to him."

The rancher shrugged. "Let him come, if he can. He's loaded down with chains right now. He can't hurt me. I'll go about my chores as usual. But I'm hungry as a bear. Better pack me up a good lunch, too. I've got to go up to the west meadow and clean up that ridge. It's alive with rattlers, and I want to stock that meadow with heifers next spring."

The woman shivered again. "You're going up to kill rattlers, Ab?"

The man laughed. "Shucks, no. I'll take our pigs up in the wagon and turn 'em loose. Pigs are just as good as roadrunners for getting rid of rattlers. Somehow, the pigs kill 'em as easy as greased lightning! Don't know why, but I've seen 'em do it."

"Well, be careful."

The woman was ladling out bacon and beans and biscuits to the man, who was smiling and rubbing his hands together with the hunger inside him . . .

Hector lay bellydown in the hot Arizona sunlight. Far below him, the paleface rancher was climbing from his buckboard and doing something to the crate that the wagon carried. Hector stiffened as an oink came to him on the dry air, then relaxed. Pigs! The crazy paleface was carting pigs, instead of letting them run wild as the Great Spirit had intended! Just one more proof of the paleface's stupidity.

And then Abner Goodman was climbing onto his buckboard again and chirping to his horses. Like a red shadow, Hector slid from the rock ledge where he lay, and moved on soundless moccasins -- the kneehigh moccasins of the Apache -- along the rock trail that paralleled the trail the rancher was taking.

For an hour, Hector followed the rancher, watching him as he drove the buckboard as high into these rocky ridges as he could, then smashing the crate and freeing the porkers that ran on their short legs, grunting and oinking.

Hector shook his head as he eased his carbine forward. Carrying pigs on a wagon, then letting them run free in these rocks. Palefaces were crazy men, all right!

He sighted along the shining barrel. The paleface was standing with his back to him, looking at the pigs running here and there. Slowly the Apache squeezed the trigger --

Something struck his ankle, something that bit and smarted!

Hector cried out hoarsely and whirled. A big diamond back rattler was uncoiling, slithering away on the hot rock. There were other rattlers among the rocks, too, sunning themselves. He had been so intent on killing the paleface rancher he had not seen them.

His leg burned. He shifted --

Something else struck him then -- hit him hard in his chest, so he toppled backward, to lie still and motionless under the bright sun, a blotch of red staining his beaded jacket.

Abner Goodman found him like that, a few moments later. He had heard the Apache's guttural cry, edged with fear. He had heard the shot Hector had fired. He had seen him shift, and had fired himself.

The rancher hunkered down, seeing the bluish discoloration of the snakebite. "He'd have got me fair between the shoulder blades if a rattler hadn't jumped him! Huh! Reckon mebbe I can spare a few snakes -- by fencing in part of these rock ridges, to keep my steers out and the rattlers in!"

"After all, a man owes something to the thing that saved his life -- even an angry rattlesnake!"

THE END

TIM HOLT

TIM HOLT

CAUGHT IN AN ABANDONED MINE SHAFT—SEALED IN WITH LITTLE AIR AND NO WATER—THEN BURIED ALIVE UNDER THE LETHAL BLAST OF A TON OF DYNAMITE—THERE SEEMS NO HOPE AT ALL FOR REDMASK AS HE IS TRAPPED WHILE TRYING TO RUN DOWN—

“THE BANDITS OF BLOODY BASIN!”



FRANK BOLLE

SOMEWHERE ON THE SCORCHING SANDS OF AN ARIZONA DESERT...



TIM HOLT

SOME HOURS LATER, AS TIM HOLT AND HIS SIDEKICK, CHITO, CUT ACROSS THE DESERT...



RECKON THE ONLY THING WE CAN DO IS HIT FOR THE NEAREST TOWN AND TURN THESE SADDLEBAGS OVER TO THE SHERIFF!



IN CHIMNEY GAP, SOME HOURS BEFORE DUSK...



GREAT JUMPIN' JEHOSEPHAT! THEM HOMBRES MUST BE MEMBERS OF SLICK JIM ANDREWS' BLOODY BASIN GANG! I RECOGNIZE THEM SADDLEBAGS!—THEY COME FROM THE BASCOMBE STAGE COMPANY HOLDUP!



THEY WENT INTO THE STAGHORN SALOON, SHERIFF! WATCH OUT! THEY LOOK TO BE PLUMB TOUGH HOMBRES!



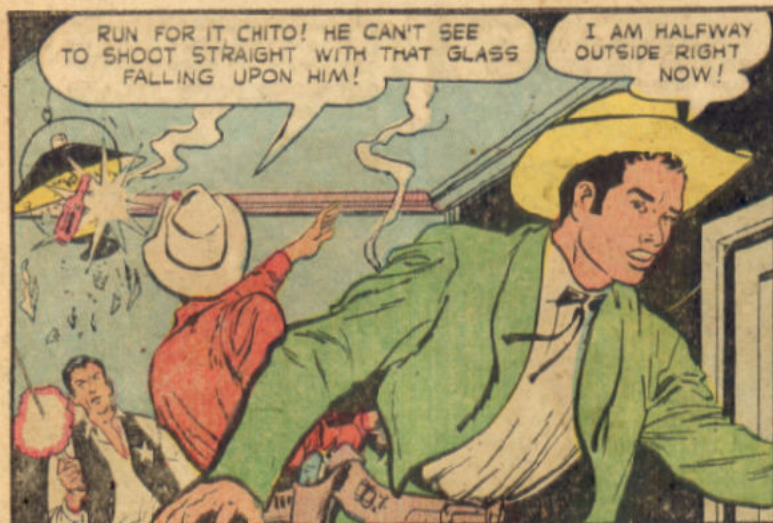
REACH FOR THE CEILING, GENTS! I'M ARRESTING YOU BOTH FOR STAGECOACH ROBBERY AND MURDER!



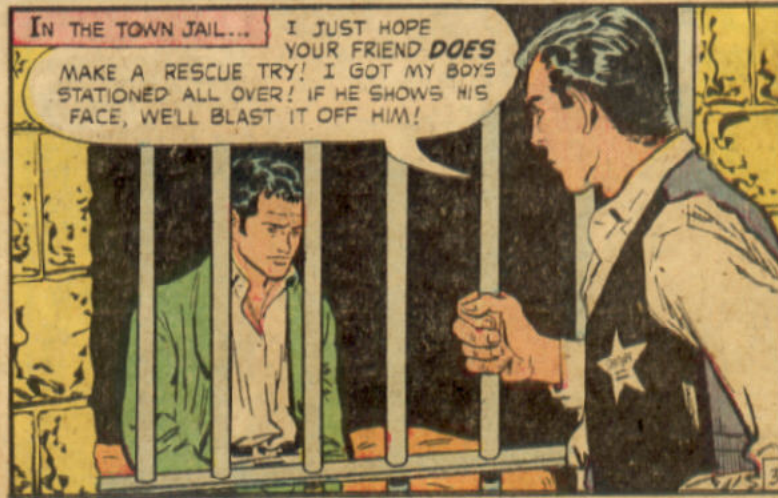
BEHIND CHITO'S BACK, TIM'S HAND CLOSES ON A BOTTLE OF SODA POP—BUT WHAT GOOD IS AN EMPTY BOTTLE AGAINST A PAIR OF LOADED SIXGUNS?



TIM HOLT

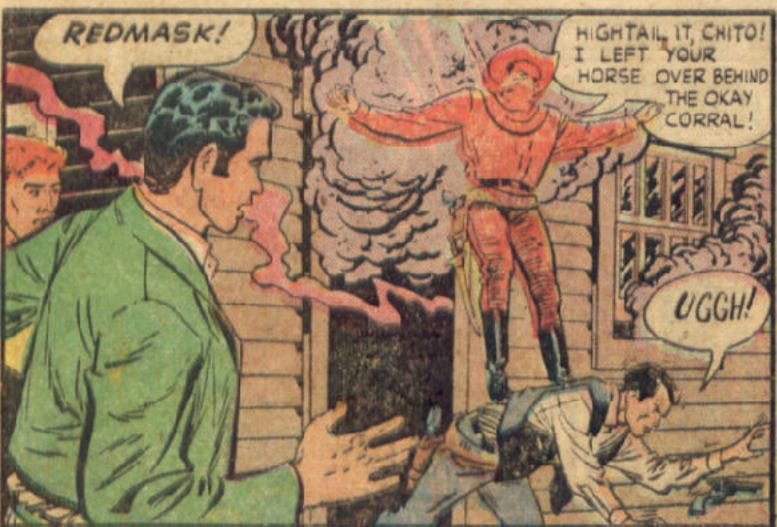


AT A FAST GALLOP, THE GREAT PALOMINO LIGHTNING, RACES OUT OF CHIMNEY GAP...





STUFFING HIS CAPE INTO THE CHIMNEY OPENING, REDMASK BLOCKS THE NATURAL ESCAPE OF THE SMOKE. SOON THE LITTLE POT-BELLIED STOVE BELOW IS SMOKING FURIOUSLY...



SOME MINUTES LATER, SHERIFF REAVES ENTERS HIS OFFICE, UNAWARE THAT A BLACK MENACING FIGURE IS WAITING FOR HIM...



ULP!!
DON'T MOVE A MUSCLE!
I STOPPED IN TO PROVE
THAT TIM HOLT AND
CHITO AREN'T MEMBERS
OF THAT ANDREWS GANG!
AND IF YOU WANT I'LL
TELL YOU HOW YOU CAN
GET—NOT ONE, BUT ALL
OF THAT CROWD...



SO YOU MET HOLT
AND VOLUNTEERED
TO ACT FOR HIM
BY SHOWING ME
THESE PAPERS
PROVING HIM A
DEPUTY SHERIFF.
NOW WHAT?



PUT THAT MONEY
WE TOOK FROM
THAT DEAD MAN
—WHO WAS
PROBABLY A
BLOODY BASIN
GANG MEMBER—
INTO YOUR OFFICE
SAFE...

LET WORD OF IT GET AROUND.
THE ANDREWS MOB WILL COME
IN TO TAKE IT! THEN I'LL
TRAIL THEM INTO THE HILLS,
TO THEIR HIDEOUT. WHEN I
FIND IT I'LL COME BACK FOR
YOU AND A POSSE, AND WE'LL
CLEAN THEM OUT!



OUTSIDE THE JAIL, A VOLUNTEER GUARD—IN REALITY
A MEMBER OF THE BLOODY BASIN GANG—EAVESDROPS...

LESS THAN AN HOUR LATER, A DOZEN GRIM-FACED
MEN SURROUND THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE, AS SLICK JIM ENTERS...

SO THEY'RE FIGURIN' ON LAYIN' A TRAP
FOR US, ARE THEY? I'LL TELL SLICK JIM
ABOUT THIS! HIM AND THE BOYS CAME
INTO TOWN TO SEE THEM HOMBRES
THEY SAID WAS PALS OF OURS...

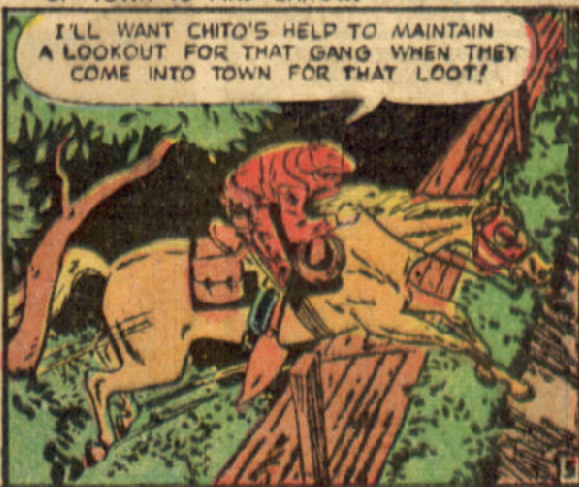


WE GOT THE MONEY—THE LOOT OF OUR
LAST FOUR ROBBERIES! MONEY THAT FREDDY
TOMES STOLE FROM OUR HIDEOUT!
LET'S GO!



HIS MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, REDMASK RIDES OUT
OF TOWN TO FIND CHITO...

I'LL WANT CHITO'S HELP TO MAINTAIN
A LOOKOUT FOR THAT GANG WHEN THEY
COME INTO TOWN FOR THAT LOOT!



HUH! I MUST HAVE LEFT TIM HOLY'S DEPUTY SHERIFF'S PAPERS IN THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE. BETTER GO OVER AND GET THEM NOW. NEVER CAN TELL WHEN THEY MIGHT BE NEEDED...



THUNDERATION! SLICK JIM ANDREWS AND HIS MEN MUST HAVE BEEN IN TOWN ALREADY—BECAUSE THOSE SADDLEBAGS ARE GONE!



NOW I HAVE TO TRACK THEM BLIND, AT NIGHT, AND I DON'T KNOW WHETHER I CAN DO IT!



ON A HEIGHT OF GROUND, REDMASK DISMOUNTS AND PUTS HIS EAR FLAT TO THE GROUND...

INDIANS USE THIS STUNT TO LISTEN FOR APPROACHING ENEMIES. SOUND—SUCH AS THAT MADE BY HORSES' HOOF—TRAVELS A GOOD DISTANCE UNDERGROUND!



THEY'RE RIDING HARD OVER BY NEEDLE BUTTES IN THE BLOODY BASIN COUNTRY! IF LIGHTNING CAN LET OUT A NOTCH OR TWO, I CAN GET TO THE FAR END OF THE BUTTES JUST AS THEY DO!



SOME HOURS LATER, MOVING IN NARROW MOUNTAIN TRAILS, THE CRIMSON RIDER COMES DOWN ON A MINE SHAFT BRIGHT WITH LAMPLIGHT...

SO THIS IS THEIR HIDEOUT! —AN ABANDONED MINE...



TOO BAD YOU FOUND IT, HOMBRE! YOU'LL NEVER LEAVE IT ALIVE...!



TIM HOLT

LEAVE HIM HERE. WE GOT THE CHIMNEY GAP BANK TO HOLD UP TOMORROW AT NOON! THEN WE'LL PULL STAKES OUT OF HERE, SO WE'LL NEVER NEED THIS HIDEOUT AGAIN! **BLOW IT UP!**



FOR HOURS, REDMASK CROUCHS IN THE SMASHED MINE SHAFT, THEN HE STRAIGHTENS SUDDENLY...



HELPLESS AS THE DYNAMITE ERUPTS, REDMASK CROUCHES WHILE THE ROOF OF THE MINE CAVES IN ON HIM!



MOMENTS LATER, AS THIN WISPS OF SMOKE RISE FROM THE AIR VENTS OF THE MINE...

OLA! I AM FOR SEE THEENGES! SMOKE FROM THE GROUND!



AN HOUR OF HARD SHOVELING, AND—

I AM LOST EEN THESE HILLS. —I JUST RIDE AROUND LOOKING FOR YOU!

A GOOD THING FOR ME THAT YOU WERE ABLE TO SEE THE SMOKE FROM THE FIRE I BUILT. BUT NOW LET'S HIGHTAIL IT FOR CHIMNEY GAP, THOSE BADHATS ARE GOING TO ROB IT'S BANK TOMORROW AT NOON!



AND SO, AS SLICK JIM ANDREWS AND HIS MEN RIDE INTO TOWN THEY ARE MET BY A SOLID SHEET OF HOT LEAD...



GOT 'EM WHERE WE WANT 'EM!

GOT EVERY LAST ONE OF 'EM— THANKS TO YOUR WARNIN' THAT THEY WERE COVIN'! AND WE RECOVERED THE MONEY THEY STOLE!

NOW THAT IT'S FINISHED, I'LL BE RIDING ON... TO CARRY WORD TO TIM HOLT THAT HE'S NO LONGER IN DANGER OF ARREST!



THE END

Here it is fellas! send for it **NOW!**

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Fun...Thrills...Action
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This Christmas be one of the many lucky boys to get a set of realistic Lionel Trains. Here's how — start now by getting this thrilling, fun-filled 36-page Lionel catalogue in full color. It's complete with trains, accessories and track layout ideas. Show the trains you want to dad, ma... everybody. Send coupon for catalogue, plus a

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